



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Noble Park Primary School

SPEECH

Thursday, 26 May 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Dreyfus, Mark, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Cabinet Secretary and Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (09:34): On Saturday, 7 May I attended the centenary celebrations of Noble Park Primary School. Starting life with 26 students in 1911, it grew to 100 students by 1917 and now has 260 students. The centenary celebrations were a great opportunity to reflect on the past and to catch up with old friends. I had the pleasure of meeting three generations of Noble Park students at the centenary, including Lloyd Lancaster and Keith Wilson, who attended Noble Park Primary School in the 1930s. At the celebrations, Lloyd approached Keith, saying, 'You look to be the same vintage as me.' After exchanging names, they started a journey of remembrance, including many stories resulting in much laughter. Keith's daughter Sharon said: 'It was a joy and privilege to see these two gentlemen joined after all these years exchanging stories of behind the shelter shed. They are old Noble Park boys with spirits strong for our great city. Why would you live anywhere else?'

This is an appropriate occasion also to remember the first teacher at Noble Park Primary School, Miss Olga Ernst. Miss Ernst was a wonderful teacher and a great Australian. She wrote her first collection of Australian fairytales, called *Fairy Tales from the Land of the Wattle*, when she was just 16. This is a special book because it was one of the first to take European fairy stories and put them in an Australian context.

Our community is now very different from that experienced by Olga Ernst in 1911, and not only because Noble Park was then a small rural settlement rather than a suburb within a city of over four million people. There was no electric light then. No-one in the Noble Park community would have had a motor vehicle, and many of the students would have come to school by horse. But we are culturally richer now than we have ever been.

This richness is reflected at Noble Park Primary School, where most students come from a non-English-speaking background, with up to 35 languages being spoken. Just as Miss Ernst made European fairy stories into Australian stories, students at Noble Park Primary School will make their cultural traditions part of the Australian story. The stories that start at Noble Park primary are the stories of Australia's future.

I am sure Miss Ernst would be proud of what her little school, which started life in a rented hall in 1911, has become. I wish to congratulate David Rothstadt, the principal at Noble Park primary, and all the staff, parents, friends and students for the enjoyable and well-organised centenary celebrations, for contributing to the ongoing success of this excellent school and for the valuable contribution that they make to our community.